



Grantees interested in participating in training workshops and follow-up onsite help may contact Audrey Smolkin (asmolkin@hrsa.gov) for referrals and further information.

February 14, 2002

MIS DATABASE

CAP grantees participated in a Technical Assistance roundtable discussion on February 14, 2002 to discuss a proposed database designed to help grantees build a management information system. The purpose of the call was to determine those system components that would be most useful to grantees at various stages of system development, from pre-planning and design through creation and implementation. A number of interested grantees participated in the call and provided interesting feedback for database developers to consider.

Four primary questions were addressed during the call:

1. What general and specific components should be included in the database?
2. Which components may NOT be included?
3. What kinds of things are grantees interested in learning from other grantees' experiences?
4. How should HRSA collect systems information from grantees?

System Components

The proposed CAP database would provide information on vendors and their products and allow grantees to share their MIS development experiences.

Grantees discussed the following database attributes:

- The database should be simple. Too much information could easily become overwhelming. There needs to be a balance between providing valuable information and preventing information overload.
- The database should offer four primary information components:
 1. *Grantee Profiles/Experiences*: This component would provide basic contact information on each participating CAP collaborative along with simplified versions of their MIS development experiences. Respective grantees should be able to update their information through Internet access.

2. *Vendor Profiles:* This component would provide basic information on available vendors, including company ownership information, time in business, and relevant product release dates.
3. *Product Profiles:* Each product profile comprising this component should answer the following questions:
 - What functions/components does the product provide (e.g. pharmacy, referrals, eligibility, etc.)?
 - Is the product designed to support a collaborative community of providers? Can it be implemented across multiple systems?
 - What kind of hardware does the product require?
 - What kind of platform does the product use?
 - What kind of software does the product use?
 - Does the product require a Web server?
 - Is the product accessible via the Web?
 - What kind of information security does the product offer?
 - Does the product require a T1 line or can it be accessed via an ISP?
 - Can additional functions be added to the product after initial development and, if so, at what costs?
 - Can the product be integrated with or linked to other systems and, if so, is the vendor willing to assist with the integration process?
 - Is there anything particular that the product cannot do relevant to important CAP grantee requirements?
4. *Searchable Database of Functions:* The database should allow users to search for specific products by functions, such as pharmacy claims, eligibility requirements, referrals etc.

Components That May Not be Included in the System

Grantees also discussed some components that may not be included in the new CAP system. Federal regulations, functionality issues, or other potential conflicts prevent some components from being included. These include positive/negative reviews of vendors, specific pricing information on featured products, and long, detailed narratives from grantees. Additional components may be added to this list as the system is developed.

What Grantees Want to Learn from Other Grantees

A number of call participants offered ideas about what they hope to learn from other grantees about MIS development. The following items were suggested for the Grantee Profiles component of the database:

- Is the grantee's management information system currently operational and, if so, for how long?
- What platform does the system use and how does it function?
- What are the system's annual operating costs? What is/was the collaborative's IT budget?
- What were the specific results of implementing the system and the services it provides? What are the program-wide results? Did the system help the collaborative achieve any program-wide objectives?
- In what ways are grantees using these systems to enhance or implement their programs?
- Once the system has been implemented, how is it managed? What policies and procedures were implemented after it became operational? How did grantees handle relevant federal, state, and other system guidelines? (Call participants noted that there are federal and state guidelines, outside of HIPAA guidelines, that may affect development of an MIS system.)

Collecting Grantee Information to Populate the Database

All of the call participants agreed that the information provided by grantees should be limited in order to remain useful. The suggestion to develop a survey that utilizes checkboxes and "yes" or "no" answers as opposed to open narratives was well received. It was noted that there may be times when additional explanation is necessary, but that space should be consistently limited and users directed to contact respective grantees for more detailed information.

There are currently 136 CAP grantees, and the Program does not have the resources to personally interview each grantee about its MIS. The following ideas were offered to address this constraint:

- Develop a Web-based survey that allows grantees to voluntarily submit their information
- Conduct a limited phone survey of a sample of grantees
- Hold a technical meeting that features a demonstration area where grantees could examine the CAP database and discuss their own systems

The issue of gathering accurate grantee MIS information is currently one of the biggest issues related to building this database. Grantees are encouraged to contact Audrey Smolkin at asmolkin@hrsa.gov with their suggestions for gathering this information.

Additional Suggestions

Several call participants offered additional suggestions for enhancing the proposed database:

- One grantee suggested developing a scenario around a patient experience that could help guide grantees with little or no technical background as they consider the components required for their collaborative's MIS. The scenario would monitor a patient from entry into the system to various potential situations (received care, referred to a specialist, received pharmaceuticals etc.). The MIS components required for each stage of the patient's care could then be noted so that the grantee would understand what is needed for the system.
- Many grantees as well as a HRSA representative emphasized the importance of outcomes. They said they would like to see the focus of grantees MIS experiences be the demonstration of outcomes that resulted from system implementation.
- One grantee suggested making previously developed Requests For Proposals (RFPs) available to fellow grantees, in an effort to share existing resources. Many grantees may have similar requirements, and could save significant time by starting with another grantee's RFP and tailoring it to their system needs.
- Since extensive information already exists on the Internet, particularly on the Health Information and Management System Society website (HIMSS), it was emphasized that the CAP database should not duplicate a system that is already available.
- Many grantees would like to see more information about security and privacy issues, especially those that extend beyond HIPAA compliance. Information security policies and procedures required once a product has been identified and implemented is an important issue among all grantees.

Conclusion

This call represents an early attempt to identify grantee issues and generate ideas about development of the CAP MIS database system. A broad range of related issues was discussed. Grantees are encouraged to contact Audrey Smolkin at asmolkin@hrsa.gov with further input on this topic. Input may range from developing a list of potential questions for the grantee survey, to participating in future technical meetings, or testing a demo program prior to implementation. Subsequent Technical Assistance calls on this topic may be initiated as CAP moves forward with this important initiative.